

The Open Mike^{District 2}

A Newsletter From Councilman **Mike Knapp**

Volume 2, Number 2

March 2006

A Moment at the Mike

Help Wanted: Transportation Issues Need Your Attention

Our economy – not just in the Upcounty or Maryland, but around the nation – is becoming increasingly transient. What that perhaps clumsy use of the word means is that our economy is generally no longer as dependent on a sense of place as it used to be. For generations, people have flocked to certain locations – Detroit, Washington, DC, Seattle, Silicon Valley – because that was where the jobs were. Most likely, a particular industry had set up its headquarters in one of these places, and people working for them were going to have to live nearby.



Councilmember Knapp

While that continues to remain the case for manufacturing, we've seen the growth of other virtual or so-called "intellectual" industries – such as painting, writing, policy consulting – that don't necessarily require workers to reside in or near a certain area. In fact, with the growing sophistication of the internet, cell phones, and PDAs, it's become possible to set up a virtual office for any industry almost anywhere, making location even less critical.

The Upcounty region definitely has its share of great businesses and industries that require workers to reside nearby; but like countless other communities, we're also seeing more and more artists, writers, consultants, web designers, and others moving into our community by choice, and not by necessity. Why do they do it? I've asked, and the answer I get is a simple one:

Because our county is a terrific place to live, with great communities and great people.

But what exactly is it that makes a community great? Certainly great people are a part of it, but great people don't just randomly pick a spot to live or gather; there has to be something there in the first place to catch their interest. We all have certain expectations of what we want out of our communities, and county government can play an important part in making communities attractive. Good schools, abundant libraries, and the wide-open spaces provided by the Agricultural Reserve are all successful government efforts that have helped create the Upcounty culture of opportunity that so many find attractive. And as your Councilmember, it's my job to ensure we continue to invest in these resources that provide the backdrop against which you and your neighbors build your lives.

Still, there are at least two other areas within the government's responsibility that we haven't yet

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managed to capitalize on as well as we should if we are to keep our communities thriving: affordable housing and transportation.

I've talked quite a bit about transportation in *The Open Mike* recently, and I'm going to ask your indulgence again this month, because transportation remains one of the most important challenges facing not only the Upcounty, but all of Maryland. Our residents need more and better ways of getting around our communities and our state, and our current infrastructure clearly isn't meeting our needs – we've got too many years of insufficient funding to catch up with. While things are getting better, we're approaching a critical time for making an impact on government policies and funding relating to transportation and transit options not in our county and our state. And I need your help.

First, [as I mentioned here last month](#), the [Corridor Cities Transitway](#) – a light rail system that would connect the Shady Grove Metro area with Frederick – needs funding. If funding is not made available for this project this year, it'll be shelved indefinitely. **I urge you to contact your State Senators and Delegates ([click here](#), if you're not certain who that is) and [Governor Robert Ehrlich](#) to let them know of your support for this project.**

Next, we need to reaffirm our commitment to transit options across the state, including an increased investment in Metro. I'll be introducing a resolution for the County Council's consideration next week, supporting increased funding for Metro and affirming the Council's commitment to improving transit options in the Greater Washington, DC Metropolitan area, as well as supporting efforts at the state and federal level to provide new sources of revenue for Metro and other transit options.

To this end, Maryland's state legislators are working to help, but they need your support. [Delegate Charles Barkley](#) has introduced [HB 981](#) in the [Maryland House of Delegates](#) to specifically dedicate a portion of the state's sales tax to mass transit.

Similar legislation, [HB 1392](#), has also been introduced by [Delegate Anne Kaiser](#). [Delegate](#)

[Sheila Hixson](#) has introduced [HB 1345](#) to create a Mass Transit Account within the existing Transportation Trust Fund to provide funding specifically for mass transit, while [Senator Rona Kramer](#) has introduced similar legislation, [SB850](#), in the [Maryland State Senate](#). All of these bills establish viable mechanisms for providing targeted funding for mass transit – including projects like the Corridor Cities Transitway, Metro, Baltimore transit projects, and other activities around the state. They're definitely worth a closer look, if not your support.

At the federal level, [Congressman Tom Davis of Virginia](#) has introduced [H.R. 3496](#) – which is being cosponsored by the members from the Maryland and Virginia Congressional delegations – to provide increased federal funding for Metro, provided that Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia all increase their commitment to Metro. As indicated above, Maryland presently has a number of bills moving through the legislative process; in the District, legislation authored by [Councilmember Jack Evans](#) is being considered by the [DC City Council](#). In Virginia, prospects

All of these bills establish viable mechanisms for providing targeted funding for mass transit – including projects like the Corridor Cities Transitway, Metro, Baltimore transit projects, and other activities around the state.

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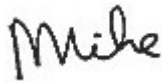
Help Wanted! (continued from page 2)

have dimmed somewhat for similar legislation due to a [defeat in the State House](#), but [Virginia Governor Tim Kaine](#) has indicated he remains committed to increased funding.

A great transit system is the backbone against which great communities are built. Let's join together in letting lawmakers and other policymakers know of our support for an increased investment in transportation and transit systems. The time is now -- so make your voice heard.

As always, feel free to [contact me](#) if I can be of any assistance to you. It's my pleasure to serve.

Regards,



Mike Knapp
Councilmember, District 2

MTA Reverses Decision on MARC Station Closures

Boyd's, Dickerson Remain Open: MTA Sets Up Advisory Committee

Thanks to a loud and organized community effort, the [Maryland Transit Administration](#) (MTA) reversed its decision to close the Upcounty [MARC](#) stations located at Boyd's and Dickerson. MTA notified the public of its decision on February 10, only two days after testimony at a public hearing made it obvious MTA had not adequately researched, and therefore could not justify, its recommendation to close these stations.



MARC stations in the Upcounty will remain open.

On February 8, the Maryland State Senate Finance Committee held a public hearing on [Senate Bill 366](#), introduced by [Senator Rob Garagiola](#), to prohibit MTA from closing the MARC stations until it conducted a more comprehensive review and issued a formal report (similar legislation, [HB 756](#), was introduced in the House by [Delegate Jean Cryor](#)). Senator Garagiola's legislation was particularly appreciated by Upcounty residents -- including me -- who felt that MTA had made its decision without ever providing a formal review or report. All we had was MTA's word -- through a press release, no less -- that it had fully explored the options and came up with its recommendation to close the Boyd's and Dickerson stations.

In [my testimony](#) before the Senate Finance Committee that day, I explained that MTA had never consulted with anyone in county government -- either in the executive or legislative branch --

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before it made its decision, so the county was never able to refute or address any of MTA's concerns. But (as I explained in my testimony) it got worse:

After announcing in December that it was recommending closing these stations, MTA held a public hearing in Barnesville on January 5, 2006, where I and many other residents testified to the critical need for MARC. MTA left the record open for public input until January 9 at 5 p.m. I can only guess that MTA houses a record number of speed readers and speed writers, because less than 24 hours after the 5 p.m. deadline, MTA had issued its final decision. That suggested to me that MTA's decision to close these stations was pre-ordained, regardless of what it learned at the Barnesville hearing, thereby making a complete mockery of the hearing process.

Further, I pointed out in exasperation that [a baffling letter I received from Transportation Secretary Flanagan](#) on January 31 -- in which he continued to cite concerns about costs of installing ticketing machines and more convenient boarding locations -- only reaffirmed my belief "that MTA has no idea what it's talking about, and didn't learn a thing from the hearings" we'd had in Barnesville in early January.

My concerns were echoed and eloquently elaborated upon by county residents and MARC riders -- and couldn't be adequately refuted by MTA. With the pressure mounting -- and with likely passage of SB 366 looming -- MTA announced that it would leave the Boyds and Dickerson stations open (as well as the Jessup and St. Denis stations on the Camden line, which were also recommended for closure). MTA also posted [a notice on its website](#), which states in part that:

"Secretary Flanagan also announced he will establish an advisory committee that will consist of MARC riders to review this issue..."

Secretary Flanagan also announced he will establish an advisory committee that will consist of MARC riders to review this issue and assist the Maryland Department of Transportation in complying with the legislative requirements of Senate Bill 366 and any other bill affecting MARC service. 'Members of the advisory committee will be tasked with conferring with local officials, CSX and other interested parties,' added Secretary Flanagan. 'I will rely heavily on their recommendations. In the coming days, I will be soliciting expressions of interest from MARC riders who are willing to serve on this committee.'

I encourage any resident who might be interested in serving on this advisory committee to contact MTA and let the Secretary know of your interest -- then [drop me a line](#) and tell me how it went.

Naturally, I'm very pleased that MTA chose to reverse its decision and keep these Upcounty stations open. But I'm ever more pleased that, working together, we were able to make it clear that the mounting transportation needs of Montgomery County require more options for residents, not less. I'll continue to make the case for more and better transit options in the Upcounty and beyond. And I know you'll continue to [let me know your views](#) on what you think we can do together to help meet our transportation needs.

Clarksburg Fire Station Up and Running; Work Continues on Expanded Facility

As the lead member for Fire and Rescue Services on the Council's Public Safety Committee, it's my job to keep track of the progress we're making in ensuring our county has adequate fire and rescue service. For that reason, I'm pleased to report that with the placement of a fully-staffed fire service directly in Clarksburg, response times for the Clarksburg area have already dropped from twelve minutes to four -- and those eight minutes can make a real difference when it comes to fighting those terrifying, opening moments of a fire. That's clearly good news for Clarksburg and the surrounding communities, and the County is continuing to work to ensure the news only continues to get better.



We're in the middle of a multi-phase approach to ensuring the community has a full range of fire and rescue services that will result in the completion of a permanent, fully-equipped fire station in Clarksburg by fiscal year 2010. Phase I commenced in November 2005, with the opening of the a temporary fire station in the Gateway Business Park. Temporary in name only, this station is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and houses a fully staffed engine with Advanced Life Support capability. Additional emergency care is provided by an EMS unit that is dispatched, as needed, from one of the surrounding Upcounty stations to handle victim transport.

Phase II involves completing an expanded, albeit still temporary, fire facility next to site of the present facility. This expanded site will also house direct EMS service, meaning that emergency crews serving Clarksburg will come from that community, rather than being called in from a nearby community. Having these services located in Clarksburg helps cut precious minutes off the amount of time it can take emergency vehicles to respond to calls and reach those who need help. And again, despite being called a temporary facility, this expanded station will be the equivalent of a full-facility station, and will meet the needs of the Clarksburg community until the permanent fire station is built.

The Council agreed with the County's Fire Chief that establishing fire service directly in Clarksburg was of the highest priority, which is why we agreed on the multi-phasing of this project, instead of waiting until 2010 for a permanent facility. In addition to quickening the response times in Clarksburg, the temporary station is also taking the burden off some of the surrounding fire and rescue facilities, including some much-needed relief at the station in Germantown, one of the busiest stations in the Upcounty.

One More Bit of Good News...

Germantown Update: Germantown Station 29 has replaced its aging aerial ladder truck with a brand new one. This truck is state of the art, both in terms of function and safety. This is the first of a larger order of new apparatus that continues to arrive throughout the county.

The Open Mike Wants You!

If you have information you'd like to submit for possible inclusion in an upcoming issue of *The Open Mike*, please e-mail us at Brian.Jones@montgomerycountymd.gov and let us know.

Council Reviews State and County Policies For Coping With Avian Flu Pandemic

In late January, the County Council -- acting in its capacity as the Montgomery County Board of Health -- began an ongoing discussion and review of Maryland's and Montgomery County's policies and procedures for combating and coping with a potential avian flu pandemic. The County was briefed by Dr. Jean Taylor, an epidemiologist with the [Office of Epidemiology and Disease Control](#) at the [Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene](#)

(MDHMH), who provided the Council with a history of past flu epidemics, an overview of status of the current avian flu, and a review of Maryland's present plans for dealing with an outbreak of avian flu or other health-related emergencies.



The 1918 "Spanish flu" epidemic is believed to have been of avian origin. At the moment, there is no flu pandemic in the world.

The [Center for Disease Control](#) (CDC) defines an influenza pandemic as "a global outbreak of disease that occurs when a new influenza-A virus appears or 'emerges' in the human population, causes serious illness in people, and then spreads easily from person to person worldwide." There is currently no pandemic influenza in the world. However, there is some concern that the current Avian influenza could, under the right conditions, spread to humans. An Avian influenza is an infection caused by the avian flu virus, which occurs naturally among birds worldwide. The 1918-1919 "Spanish flu" epidemic, for example, appears to have had an avian origin, while the "Asian flu" pandemic in 1957, and the "Hong Kong flu" in 1968, were caused by viruses containing a combination of human and avian flu.

According to MDHM estimates, if an avian flu outbreak were to sweep across the United States, there could be as many as 1.2 million cases in Maryland alone, including nearly 45,000 hospitalizations and up to 10,000 deaths, primarily among the very young, the very old, and at-risk populations. The State of Maryland initiated formal pandemic planning in 1999 -- which included working with the agricultural community on ways to protect poultry workers -- and is presently reviewing and updating its plan. The state has also set up a website specifically to discuss flu in Maryland, and to update residents on activities in and around our state. Visit flu.maryland.gov for more information.

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Pandemic (continued from page 6)

"... if an avian flu outbreak were to sweep across the United States, there could be as many as 1.2 million cases in Maryland alone..."

At the County level, it's critical that we ensure we have a comprehensive approach not only for protecting the physical health of residents to the greatest extent possible, but also that we have a plan for keeping county government, and appropriate county services, operating. This is important, because it's estimated that, in the event of a pandemic, up to 30 percent of Montgomery County government employees could be sidelined due to illness on any given day. This includes not only police, fire and rescue, and other emergency workers, but also teachers, librarians, and park and recreation employees. In the event of a health emergency, the County has the authority to determine which government services are critical and therefore must be staffed, and which can be reduced, as well as what steps can be taken, for example, to communicate quickly and effectively with county personnel

and residents about reductions in services, possible health threats, and potential quarantines in the county.

The County -- acting primarily through the County Health Officer and the County Executive -- can also put into place emergency measures to protect the health of residents and prevent further exposure to, or the spread of, the flu virus by ordering quarantines, isolating specific parts of the county, or placing limitations on public gatherings. The County Council has the authority to extend, as needed, any state of emergency, and to appropriate the funds needed to continue to mitigate the emergency. And in its role as the County's Board of Health, the Council also has the authority to adopt policies to regulate public health.

I'm hopeful that all our work toward preparing for a flu pandemic won't be necessary. But as the Chairman of the Council's Homeland Security Committee -- and as a former Eagle Scout -- I always believe in being prepared. We're doing our part to ensure County government can continue to provide residents with vital services in the event the unexpected happens, and part of that means making sure we have a system in place to get you information quickly.

The Council will continue its discussion on March 7, and I'll continue to keep you updated on our conversation. In the meantime, I encourage you to sign up for [Alert Montgomery](https://ext01.montgomerycountymd.gov/entp/s1p/esubpublic/newssubscriber.do), an alert system administered by the Montgomery County Department of Homeland Security. With this system,

Montgomery County can use the Roam Secure Alert Network to contact you during a major crisis or emergency. Alert Montgomery can deliver important emergency alerts, notifications and updates to you on one or all of the devices you specify -- e-mail, cell phone, text pager, BlackBerry, or wireless PDA.

When an incident or emergency occurs, authorized senders can notify you using Alert Montgomery. This is your personal connection to updates, instructions on where to go, what to do, or what not to do, who to contact and other important information.

Sign up for Alert Montgomery, an alert system administered by the Montgomery County Department of Homeland Security.

Council Approves Knapp Amendment Limiting the Size of Septic Systems in Ag Reserve

On February 14, the County Council took another positive step in its continuing efforts to preserve the integrity of the county's 93,000 acre Agricultural Reserve by approving my amendment to limit the size of multi-use on-site sewage systems in the Reserve. (A multi-use on-site sewage system is one which draws its water from a well system and drains into septic fields.) This vote comes on the heels of the Council's action last December to prohibit the extension of water and sewer into the Reserve.



My amendment, which was approved unanimously, modified the County's [Ten-Year Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Plan](#) to limit septic systems to 600 gallons per residential unit, the equivalent of a four-bedroom home. The Council also unanimously approved an amendment to cap the maximum size for non-exempted systems at 5,000 gallons per property. Under prior law, there was no limit on the size of these systems.

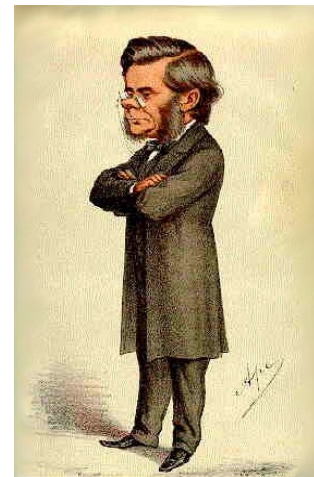
I'm very pleased with the Council's actions on these two amendments. In 2005, we celebrated the 25th anniversary of our crown jewel Agricultural Reserve and rededicated our commitment to ensuring its continued health and longevity. By limiting the size of septic systems in these zones, we will insure that the Reserve will continue to be around for its 50th birthday, and beyond. It's entirely appropriate that we limit piecemeal development in the Reserve, and preserve the ability of farmers to keep right on farming.

The Upcounty Road Scholar

DPWT Lifts On-street Parking Ban for Valley Park Drive

Got a road that needs repairing? A traffic light that's out? Is there a street or intersection that you think needs a stop sign or crosswalk? One of my responsibilities is to make sure someone knows about it -- and to do what I can to get you information on your question or request as quickly as possible.

I stay in regular contact with the [Montgomery County Department of Public Works and Transportation](#) (DPWT) and the [Maryland State Highways Administration](#) (MSHA), and provide each agency with a list of projects that need addressing in the Upcounty. Both agencies receive countless requests each week, and getting a response back can take some time. So bear with me -- if you don't see a particular project listed here, that doesn't mean it has been forgotten or



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Road Scholar (continued from page 8)

neglected, but rather that I haven't received an updated report on its progress this month.

With this in mind, the Road Scholar section of *The Open Mike* provides an opportunity to give you the latest information received from DPWT, MSHA, and others on the progress of requests that have been submitted on your behalf. It's also an opportunity for you to [let me know](#) of other projects that may need to be undertaken in your community.

Department of Public Works and Transportation

Valley Park Drive (Damascus): Back in January, I was contacted by a number of Damascus residents living on or near Valley Park Drive who were concerned that the plans for the Valley Park Drive extension -- which will connect MD 27 and MD 124 -- would prohibit residents from parking along Valley Park Drive. There was also some anxiety expressed about the County prohibiting any on-street parking while it completed work on the extension. I brought these concerns to the attention of DPWT; here's what DPWT Director Art Holmes had to say:

"The Master Plan for Damascus calls for Valley Park Drive to be a two-lane arterial roadway to serve the traffic needs of existing and future development. However, to address community and Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission concerns, the design was modified to an 'environmental arterial' with a 26-foot roadway width, curb and gutter and sidewalks. The environmental arterial roadway, which is narrower than typical arterial roads, will require less clearing and construction within the stream valley of Magruder Branch Park. The proposed sidewalks, which preclude on-street parking, will provide safety for pedestrians between existing and future neighborhoods, Woodfield Road, Ridge Road and the park trail.

"It is the goal of the Department of Public Works and Transportation to address the needs of the community by providing infrastructure that meets traffic demands and provides a basic balance between development and nature while delivering the intent of the approved Master Plan. Consequently, striking a balance sometimes results in sacrificing one element for another. In the case of valley park Drive, on-street parking is sacrificed to facilitate pedestrian safety and the proposed environmental arterial roadway.

"However, our project team is currently exploring additional opportunities that will allow for parking while providing for the safety of pedestrians. I anticipate any final decisions to be made within the next four to six weeks. It is important to understand that any alterations to the project that would allow for on-street parking may be changed in the future based on developing vehicular traffic and pedestrian needs.

"While our team reviews these matters, the parking ban in the area of Valley Park Court/Terrace and Canvasback Way will be temporarily lifted. Construction in that area will be put on hold."

UPDATE: I recently received an e-mail from DPWT informing me that, after working with community residents, modifications had been made to the project's final design that would restore roughly 20 parking spaces of on-street parking along Valley Park Drive between Valley Park Court/Terrace and Canvasback Way. My thanks to DPWT for working with area residents to resolve this matter.

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Road Scholar (continued from page 9)

Maryland State Highways Administration

Signal Timings Along MD 124: After the request of area drivers who questioned the timing of the lights along the MD 124 and MD 355 -- especially in the early morning hours -- I asked MSHA to look into the signal timing at four major intersections. Here is MSHA's response, courtesy of District Engineer Charlie Watkins:

"My traffic engineering staff has completed their evaluation, and we would like to share the findings with you. Signal timings were checked for the following four locations: MD 124 at MD 119 (Great Seneca Highway); MD 124 at MD 28 (Darnestown Road); MD 124 at MD 355 (Frederick Road); and MD 355 at Lakeforest Blvd.

"As you mentioned in your letter, signal timings vary by time of day and follow the daily variations in traffic patterns closely for greater efficiency. After the end of the evening rush hour period, most of the traffic signals adopt a cycle length which is usually shorter than the mid-day cycle length. This short cycle length is in effect through the night and varies from 100-120 seconds for the signals listed. The change to the morning rush hour cycle length goes into effect at 6:00 a.m. Our field observations did not reveal excessive delays at any of the subject intersections before 6:00 a.m. Authorities at the Montgomery County Traffic Management Center (TMC) have also observed these locations via intersection cameras and have not reported any problems with back ups. However, they agree that the side street traffic might have to wait longer than usual at these locations at around 6:00 a.m. Fortunately, this is a short-lived phenomenon and practically unavoidable given the transition from one cycle to another."

Council Public Hearings Calendar

Council Seeks Public Input on Zoning Amendments, Special Appropriations for Infrastructure Maintenance

Don't be shy! The County Council regularly holds public hearings at which we actively seek your input, thoughts, comments, and suggestions. The policies, amendments, and legislation under consideration aren't just pieces of paper; they have a very real impact on you and the lives of your fellow citizens. For this reason, residents are always encouraged to attend the public hearings and give us your views.

Hearings are held in the Council's main meeting room on the 7th Floor of the County Office Building at 100 Maryland Avenue in Rockville. **If you wish to testify on any of the items listed below, please call (240) 777-7931.**

One more thing -- the hearing schedule can change rapidly, so always check the County Council's homepage (at www.montgomerycountymd.gov) to get the most up-to-date information.

DATE	TIME	MATTERS UNDER CONSIDERATION
March 7	1:30 p.m.	Zoning Text Amendment (ZTA) 06-01: Rural Village Center Overlay Zone, Revisions ZTA 06-02: Mixed Use Town Center Zone, Revisions ZTA 06-03: Rural Neighborhood Cluster Zone, TDR Option

		ZTA 06-04: Rural Neighborhood Cluster Zone, Rural Open Space ZTA 06-05: C-2 Zone - Site Plan Review
	1:30 p.m.	Bill 2-06: Collective Bargaining - County Employees - Fact Finding Bill 3-06: Consumer Protection - Revisions
	1:30 p.m.	Special Appropriations to the Housing Opportunities Commission's FY2006 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY2005-2010 Capital Improvements Program (CIP): - Various projects relating to maintenance of Physical and Technology Infrastructure
	1:30 p.m.	Special Appropriations to Montgomery College's FY2006 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY2005-2010 CIP: - Various projects relating to maintenance of Physical and Technology Infrastructure
	1:30 p.m.	Special Appropriations to the County Government's FY2006 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY2005-2010 CIP: - Various projects relating to maintenance of Physical and Technology Infrastructure
	1:30 p.m.	Special Appropriations to the County Government's FY2006 Operating Budget: - Various projects relating to maintenance of Physical and Technology Infrastructure
	1:30 p.m.	Special Appropriations to the MCPS FY2006 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY2005-2010 CIP: - Various projects relating to maintenance of Physical and Technology Infrastructure
	1:30 p.m.	Special Appropriations to the MCPS FY2006 Operating Budget: - Various projects relating to maintenance of Physical and Technology Infrastructure
	1:30 p.m.	Special Appropriations to the MNCPPC's FY2006 Capital Budget and Amendments to the FY2005-2010 CIP: - Various projects relating to maintenance of Physical and Technology Infrastructure
	1:30 p.m.	Special Appropriations to the MNCPPC's FY2006 Operating Budget: - Various projects relating to maintenance of Physical and Technology Infrastructure
	7:30 p.m.	Special Appropriation to the MCPS FY2006 Capital Budget and Amendment to the FY2005-2010 CIP: - \$3,300,000 for Seven Locks Elementary School Replacement
March 14	1:30 p.m.	ZTA 06-06: Off-Street Parking - RE-200 and RE-1 Zones
	1:30 p.m.	Supplemental Appropriation to the Montgomery College FY2006 Operating Budget: - \$500,000 for Germantown Biotechnology Project
	7:30 p.m.	<u>T&E Committee:</u> Amendments to Ten-Year Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Plan: - Water and sewer category changes

Vox Pops**Voices From Around the Upcounty Community**

A Note from Mike: I receive countless phone calls, e-mails, and letters each day. Most are passionate, many are frustrated, and a few are downright funny...but all of them are thoughtful and well-intended. I think readers of The Open Mike will be interested to hear what their Upcounty neighbors have to say, whether they're across the street or across the county. With that in mind, the "Vox Pops" section of my newsletter features highlights from some of the correspondence and phone calls I've received in my office over the past month.

**Readers Favor Transportation Options**

"I share your views of our transportation challenges. The good news is that the new Germantown bus routes are a major improvement and getting around is much easier as a result of the changes. From what I see, Secretary Flanagan and the Governor are out of touch with our County's transit needs. Since they do not travel in our area often, they are out of touch which results in knee jerk reactions such as closing MARC stations. They are good at looking at numbers but terrible at looking at the big picture of Montgomery County's transit needs. We do need our legislature representatives to overturn the station closings and keep advocating for funding for Corridor Transit. Even a Bus Rapid System would work all the way to Frederick. Our representatives did a great job of overcoming the Governor's opposition to the upcoming emergency room in Germantown. -- Ray

"I am in favor of the corridor transitway to Frederick. This is a faster form of transportation than a bus and will encourage people to leave their cars at home. I think this is the # 1 solution to decreasing traffic from Pennsylvania, Washington and Frederick Counties. The upcounty is growing rapidly in Damascus and Clarksburg. We cannot wait 20 years or more for a transportation solution. I would like to see not only better road maintenance in the upcounty but better maintenance of the trees, bushes and flowers on the median strips... Have the landscape crews been trained to do the work? The green areas need to be tended to more frequently. Beautification of the roadways decreases stress in drivers. It is something positive for them to note." -- Elaine

Home and Hospice Care Gets a Thumbs Down

"Montgomery County's Home and Hospital Care is a joke. If you are looking to save tax dollars, discontinue this program. My daughter had mono and missed two months of school in November and December. She is a Junior at Sherwood High and was taking all honors classes when it hit her. She had one visit from a tutor from the Home & Hospital Care division of Montgomery County that told us (a direct quote): 'We don't want [her] to learn what her teachers want her to learn; and we don't want her to learn what you [meaning me as her mother] want her to learn; we want her to learn what she wants to learn.' Are you kidding me? I called the supervisor and asked for a different tutor. I was never contacted again. I ended up personally hiring tutors for her and worked directly with the teacher (God love 'em). It was not cheap. Every visit by a tutor cost me \$60. I don't know what the county pays for this service, but it isn't worth it. Every teacher I have talked to says the program is a joke. No one has had any success with it. Even so far as to say they know of padding the charges." -- Pam

**Memories of the Horace Wilson House in Clarksburg**

"I recently read the article in the Gaithersburg Gazette regarding the Horace Wilson house in Clarksburg and the efforts of the Clarksburg Historical Society to keep it at its present location.

Upon looking at the picture closely I realized it was MY old house. I lived in that house from the time I was three years old until age twelve when my parents bought a lot and built a house around the corner near the Clarksburg United Methodist Church. My grandparents bought the Wilson house and the store sometime in the early 1930's, I believe. The property was actually owned by my Grandmother Barr jointly with my mother. The store was called Barr's Grocery T/A Emory B. Edwards. After my grandfather died in 1940, my parents moved from Bethesda to help my grandmother and took over operation of the store. They retired from the business around 1965 but continued to own the property for a few years....

"The decision to move the house to build a road through to MD 355 is another bad story. With Clarksburg Road on one end (with a traffic light) and Stringtown Road on the other end (with a traffic light), it makes little sense to me to put a road there with the other roads so close. This certainly doesn't make any sense safety wise either. Lastly, it is imperative that we keep the very small historic section of Clarksburg as it is so that others can see what we prized for so many years. Certainly moving buildings out of their original location will not keep that continuity. With that in mind I ask that you do whatever you can do to keep the Wilson house or what is the Barr house to me, where it is *permanently*. Is that not the purpose of an 'historic district'?" -- Joan



Let me hear from you!

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